

Don't Just Whistle While You Work

Hunt for Home Hazards While Spring Cleaning This Year

Winter is finally over, and it's time to get your home ready for warmer months ahead.

Before you do, Vince Lisa, head of the Fire Data Analysis Division at the Naval Safety Center, suggests taking a good look around your home. He says there's a strong chance that flammable materials are lurking in many areas, and it's important to store and use them properly to avoid the risk of fire.

With yard chores—particularly lawn mowing or clearing debris—right around the corner, Vince urges caution when using and storing gasoline, a flammable liquid that readily gives off vapors easily ignited with a spark or flame. “Gasoline should be used only as a motor fuel, never as a degreaser, cleaning solvent or charcoal starter. Using gasoline for any purpose other than as a motor fuel is just too dangerous,” says Vince. He notes that if gasoline is used properly, most fires involving it can be avoided.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, on average each year, nearly 150 people die in 8,000 home fires involving gasoline. Gasoline should be stored only in tightly-capped containers specifically intended for that use and placed in a garage or lawn shed, **never** in the basement or home itself.

Vince also points out that commonly used liquids, such as lacquer thinners, denatured alcohol and other solvents—which are often stored in basement or garage workshops—can be easily ignited by a nearby furnace or hot-water heater. These liquids should be stored in their original labeled containers, tightly capped, and used far away from appliances, heaters, sparks, open flames, or other heat or flame sources. Other liquids, including paint thinners, mineral spirits and kerosene, are less easily ignited, but should be treated with the same respect. Finally, wash rags soaked in oils or paint thinners with a mild

degreasing detergent, rinse and keep outside until dry.

“Improperly stored or used flammable or combustible products cause unnecessary fires, injuries and even deaths,” says Vince. “Becoming familiar with the hazardous materials can go a long way toward protecting you, your family and your home.”

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